

Devil's Claw & Moonstone by Emily Michel

The Community

The term is used for those born Gifted with a magical ability and trained at the Homestead. The rest of the world is referred to as the common world, and non-Gifted people are called commoners. Most commoners can use ritual magic, such as spells, circles, and potions. Their abilities and strength vary depending on practice and natural affinity for magic.

Magic flows strongest through the maternal line. If your mother was Gifted, you will be, too, with the rare exception of a wyrdling (see below). If only your father is Gifted, the chances are 50/50. Gifted witches have an innate ability to harness magical energy to perform certain deeds based on their specific Gift. Most witches have only one Gift, but, with training, they can use this energy to enhance and change ritual magic to enable them to duplicate the effects of another Gift. Gifts tend to run in families, but this is not always the case.

The original Community was composed of European immigrants in the 1700's. Attempts were made to invite Native American tribes, but they chose not to participate due to biases in the first system the Europeans devised. Some individuals from the tribes currently choose to undergo some training at the Homestead, and relations are generally congenial between the Assembly and tribal leaderships.

With the value the Community places on magical ability, as new immigrants arrived, their magical and religious beliefs and practices were integrated. Many Community members practice Wicca, but all major religions, and many minor ones, are represented.

The Assembly

The Assembly as it now stands was created shortly before the outbreak of Civil War in the US. Prior to this, each Gifted family had a vote on all Community matters, but due to the large distances separating Community members, assembling one member from each family became more difficult as the US expanded its borders. Instead a permanent council was formed, with the Matriarchs of the nine most powerful families and the nine Chiefs serving as voting members.

- A governing council made of 19 voting individuals
- The Keeper is the Chair. Currently **Alicia Larsen**
 - Full title: The Keeper of the Lore, the Great Grimoire, and the Sacred Dagger
 - Has ability in all Gifts and is strong in several
 - When current Keeper retires (around 65), a set of trials determines the next Keeper
 - Casts any tie-breaking vote put to the Assembly
- The Director is an advisory member to the Assembly. Currently **Joe Girard**.
 - Runs the day-to-day operation of the Homestead, training witches of all ages.
 - Is the retired Keeper and advises the current Keeper
 - Serves in an advisory capacity as a non-voting member of the Assembly

- The Chiefs (9) are voting members, elected by those with each specific Gift for a period of 5 years for no more than two consecutive terms.
 - Healer – **Robin Hanlee** – trains witches in healing spells and modern first aid
 - Verdant – **Vincent Cardello** – speaks with and grow plants
 - Craftsman – **Genevieve Lebrun** – creators of magical objects, blacksmiths
 - Seer – **Patricia Miller** – clairvoyant, visions of past, present & future.
 - Cognizant – **Firuz Bishara** - makers of illusions, empaths, telepaths
 - Medium – **Miguel Vargas** – communicate with the dead or spirits
 - Tempest – **Gregory Koslov** – weather witches
 - Carrier – **Maeve Chisholm** – make gateways for traveling, bend space-time
 - Guardian – **Claudia Cho** – battle magic, martial arts, guns, archery, blades (referred to as “Commander” instead of “Chief”)
- Matriarchs of the Founding Families (9) are the chosen representatives of their families. Each family chooses as they see fit, but often the heir is the strongest woman of the next generation.
 - **Dora Bauer**
 - **Sylvia Gordon**
 - **Rhea Hanlee**
 - **Yolanda Lopez**
 - **Linda Eklund**
 - **Charlotte Jacques**
 - **Priscilla Dunne**
 - **Guan-yin Hsu**
 - **Mariana Sanchez**

Successors

- These potential Keepers are brought to the Homestead with their family to be raised around age 5. If they are not trained from a young age, can become unstable and dangerous.
- After college they are apprenticed to the current Keeper as “Successors”
- Observe the proceedings of the Assembly to learn, non-voting, non-speaking
- Those who do not pass the trials eventually become recruiters and help the Keeper and Director locate new Successors and Gifted witches born to commoners.
- Teach at the Homestead when not traveling

Wyrdlings

- Usually male children of Gifted women, born without the ability to access their magic
- Only a few are born each generation
- Certain spells and magical objects can tap into their powers
- Often work with Guardians to track down monsters and rogue practitioners
- Not allowed to marry to ensure loyalty to the Community
- Discouraged from having children to prevent possible spread of their condition through the Gifted population